

SEARS™

THE MAGAZINE THAT LEAVES MARKS
VOLUME 2 ISSUE 9

DIVINE HERESY'S
TRAVIS NEAL

STAYING COMPOSED
WITH TYLER BATES

THE DIGITAL ART OF
DWAYNE MURPHY

RETURN TO BLOOD ISLAND
WITH 42ND ST. PETE

RED SHIRT PICTURES'
MICHAEL R FELSER

BITCH
SLAP

JULIA VOTH

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THE INTERVIEWS

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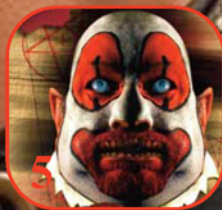
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SEPTEMBER 2009

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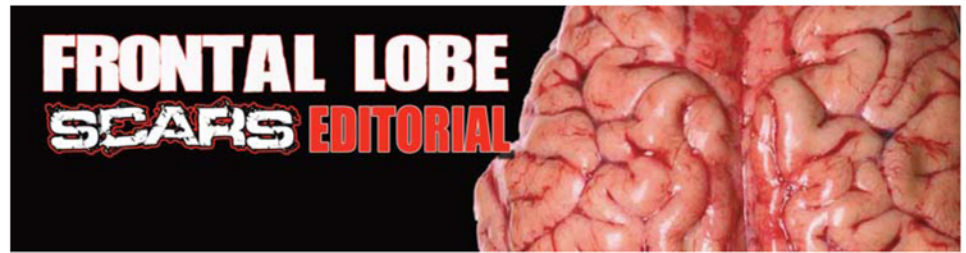
**You can contact SCARS via the USPS
by writing to:**

SCARS Magazine
P.O. BOX 9001
Warwick, RI 02889

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So we are fast approaching Halloween 2009 and the rest of the "evil" holiday season. And in this season of evil, am I angry enough to rant about something as lofty as injustice?

People are losing their jobs. So they're angry. The President is trying to help the people make a choice about health care. So they're angry.

Kanye West felt as though it would be a good gesture to take Taylor Swift's shining moment to let the people know Beyonce was better. So they're angry.

Do you notice a theme here? Everybody's angry.

My associate editor and I had a meeting in a well known book store where we look at other publications, and noticed that things we have covered in a big way in the past, pay to be in "other magazines" - while we do it for free.

I am not angry. Actually it's kind of cool to think we noticed them first.

So while we bust our asses here at SCARS and enjoy our Ramen Noodles and Mac and Cheese, like a lot of the indy filmmakers we support, we just want to let the bigger guys know...

We're not angry.

Because of you, the reader; you, the artist; you, the members of our online community; you, the vendor of a specialty horror store, that maybe wishes it earned more; you, the filmmaker who wants an audience to appreciate how hard your crew worked to create something fun, scary, or horrific, we're able to bring you another issue. We're proud to showcase "Bitch Slap!" this month. In a time where lots call themselves grindhouse-inspired, or Corman homages, this is truly a standout in a field of imitations.

And we're also proud to have said it first.

Ray and the rest of us here at SCARS!



EXPERIMENTS IN DIGITAL

THE DARK ART OF D'WAYNE MURPHY

By Fallon Masterson

Searching through D'wayne Murphy's webspace is an interesting juxtaposition. On one hand we have D'wayne Murphy, the professional portfolio filled with brochures, classic business images, and photography slanting from urban to natural settings. And then we have D'wayne "Dino" Murphy – the 3D artist extraordinaire, who spent his Saturday nights in front of the TV, glued to the local late night horror hosts, who knew, since childhood, that he wanted to create monsters, demons, and other worldly abominations as a career. Personally, we like this Dino guy a little bit better.

A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Arts, Dino is versed in drawing, figure drawing, painting, design, and all the other basics you could hope for from an art grad. But simple two-dimensional drawings weren't enough to portray the genres and themes that Dino's loved since the days of the Saturday Night Creature Features. In order to bend the boundaries of reality, he's found a style of art that reflects what he calls the "twisted believability factor."

Using a combination of photo-montage, created textures, drawings, a wealth of Photoshop, and elements of 3D, brings together all the parts and pieces of Dino's art. It doesn't matter if he's painting zombies, Dino still sticks with an attitude that's pro to the bone, remarking, "I maintain a strong interest in creating believable characters and trying to capture the moment in time."

Whatever these moments in time are, all we know is we can't wait for him to create more visual creepshows





Circus Of The
Damned

MISTER
HAPPY



Frankenstein

*Victor Von Frankenstein
Creatures Birthed Before The Monster
A Visual Reference*



[REC] VS QUARANTINE

DID THE REMAKE BEAT THE ORIGINAL?

BY J.C. WALSH

What do you do when you're trapped inside an old apartment complex, surrounded by savage, blood thirsty neighbors infected with a mysterious outbreak, and the only ones that can

help are the cops, whose only plan is to barricade all doors and windows, vanquishing any hope of escape?

YOU FILM IT.

A popular trend in the horror genre, shooting from the first person point of view throws the audience head on into the action, creating a rich intensity and a true sense of realism. Instead of watching a movie through the lens of a cameraman, you feel the immediacy of a documentary unfolding, with horrifying events.

In the Spanish film "Rec" (2007, but only recently released in the USA on DVD), directors Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza use the first person point of view to deliver their nerve shocker of a horror flick. When the movie starts, the story focuses on Angela and her cameraman Pedro, as they shoot a report based on the lives and jobs of firefighters. We watch as the duo tags along, interviewing the firefighters, where they eat and sleep. The first ten minutes of the film allows the audience to have a certain type of intimacy with the characters, personalizing them so they are liked and believable.

Anxious to see some action, Angela is ecstatic when the alarm sounds off and hurries with Pedro to stick with the Fire Unit assigned to them as they answer the distress call. After reaching the old apartment, two police officers are already on the scene, trying to keep the worried tenants under control. Based on the information given from police and the landlord, they find out that a woman has been screaming hysterically in her apartment. Angela and Pedro follow behind the firefighters to investigate the woman's screams and document the hysteria, but get a reality shock of their own when the woman viciously attacks a police officer. From there, all hell breaks loose.



The story unfolds in a frenzy. Everyone's worst fear imaginable comes true when police and military trap them inside. Because the film took time into getting to know each character, we now get to see how each one will react in the desperate fight for survival as the people they know are changing one by one. Like zombies, those bitten become infected. Unlike zombies, the infection makes them disoriented, confused, and extremely ill; more life-like than the classic flesh eater. Once the infection is full blown, the only thing they know is to attack. As things worsen, Angela and Pedro try to uncover the cause behind what's happening, while at the same time get every moment on film and stay alive.

"Rec" is full of surprises. Wherever the camera turns, you never know when something is going to jump out. It's a great story, one that crosses the line between the power and freedom of the media versus the iron hand of authority. Part of "Rec"'s terror is the looming possibility of, "What if this really did happen?"

Having this foreign masterpiece land in

their lap, director/writer John Erick Dowdle and his brother writer/producer Drew Dowdle, filmed the U.S. remake, "Quarantine," with the intent of not changing much of the story. Their version of the film is shot nearly frame by frame, only adding their own twist to the Americanized foreign film. Like "Rec," the story follows Angela, now played by Jennifer Carpenter ("Dexter"), and her cameraman Scott, played by Steve Harris. The characters in the film spend a little more time at the fire station than the original, adding more depth with laughable scenes to allow the audience a false sense of relaxation before the horror strikes.

Straying away from the trend of American films remaking foreign horror films, watering them down, and slapping them with a PG-13 rating, the Dowdle brothers surpass it, packing "Quarantine" with more gore, and more behind the story without making it ridiculous, or erasing the realism of the original. They instead enhance it, finding ways to bringing forth a much scarier film. Particular scenes stick out for their creativity. For example, one of the infected trying to walk on a shattered

ankle, not feeling any pain as the leg was literally caving in. Or when the camera was used to beat an infected person's skull in, finally backing off with blood splattered across the lens. "Quarantine" also showed more of Scott, the cameraman. Giving a face to the man filming was a great form of character development, adding something special to the film.

In "Rec," the movie didn't explain much about the infection. Even though we discovered some of its origins towards the conclusion of the film, it still remained a frightening phenomena. "Quarantine" spent more time with what the infection was and how it was spread, and even though we were given an explanation (of a super rabies epidemic), the origin more-or-less remains a mystery. As an audience, we're left with the dark fear of a situation unresolved.

The Dowdles change other scenes as well. They dig deeper into the extremes the military would go to keep people contained in the building, questioning whether they are using safe precautions or suffering from paranoia. Even though "Rec" was much



faster paced, "Quarantine" slowed to allow the characters to act more freely, to struggle with their emotions during a frightening situation. This works well in the film, but tends to drag out the movie a bit, compared to the break neck intensity in the original. But once "Quarantine" reaches the "night vision" scene, it's a much longer, suspense builder as you watch Angela move blindly in the darkness with something lurking near her - and the only ones that can see are the audience through the cameraman's eyes. (Although the creature in "Rec" looks much more disturbing than the one portrayed in "Quarantine.") Both films equal each other out in delivering their final scare when reaching the end of the film.

Unfortunately, while "Quarantine" stands out a little more than "Rec," the superiority is not without controversy from some fans, disgusted at its recognition over "Rec," which they feel was never given the attention it deserved in America. Ultimately, there is no hiding Hollywood stole an original idea, and without "Rec," "Quarantine" would not exist. But I also believe that if "Quarantine" didn't fall into the hands of such great directors as the Dowdles (who filmed the much waited Poughkeepsie Tapes), the movie wouldn't be as good. Hopefully with "Rec 2" on the way, Jaume Balaguero and Paco Plaza will finally get the recognition they too deserve.

My advice to anyone who hasn't seen neither films, watch "Rec" first. Then "Quarantine." Appreciate who was the original creator of this great horror story, but keep an open mind and enjoy both films for the thrills and scares that both boldly deliver.





RETURN TO BLOOD ISLAND

By 42nd St. Pete

They were three films just made for the Grindhouse and Drive In circuit. They had monsters, mad scientists, dismembered limbs, mutilated corpses, naked women, great trailers, and great promotional gimmicks. But the on screen carnage paled in comparison to the atrocities the actual films suffered. Retitled and edited to pieces for broadcast TV. Dubious video tapes with different titles and sometimes different movies. Ah ,the horror of it all.

They were three films just made for the Grindhouse and Drive In circuit. They had monsters, mad scientists, dismembered limbs, mutilated corpses, naked women, great trailers, and great promotional gimmicks. But the on screen carnage paled in comparison to the atrocities the actual films suffered. Retitled and edited to pieces for broadcast TV. Dubious video tapes with different titles and sometimes different movies. Ah ,the horror of it all.

For a while it looked like good prints of these films were lost forever. Enter Sam Sherman from In-

dependent International, who had ties with Hemisphere films. Sam cut a deal with Image to finally release the Blood Island Trilogy uncut. Brides of Blood, Mad Doctor of Blood Island, and Beast of Blood Island finally were restored to DVD. Three obscure films by directors who's roots go back into the late 30's.

Gerado De Leon," Gerry" as he was called was a writer, director , actor & producer. His first film was Bahay Kubo in 1938. Gerry worked up until 1941 when the Japanese invaded. Gerry didn't get back to film making until 1944. He had discovered a guy named Edgar Romero, no relation to George, but like George, Edgar or Eddie would change the face of horror in his country.

Eddie wrote stories and was published at age 12. Gerry read some of these and prodded Eddie to write some screen plays. Eddie said that he "fell into the film business". De Leon became Eddie's mentor, teaching him and co directing some films with him. In 1959, they came up with a film called Terror is a Man. It was an Is-

land of Lost Souls type of film , but with one creature. Little did either men know at the time, but this film was setting the stage for the Blood Island Trilogy.

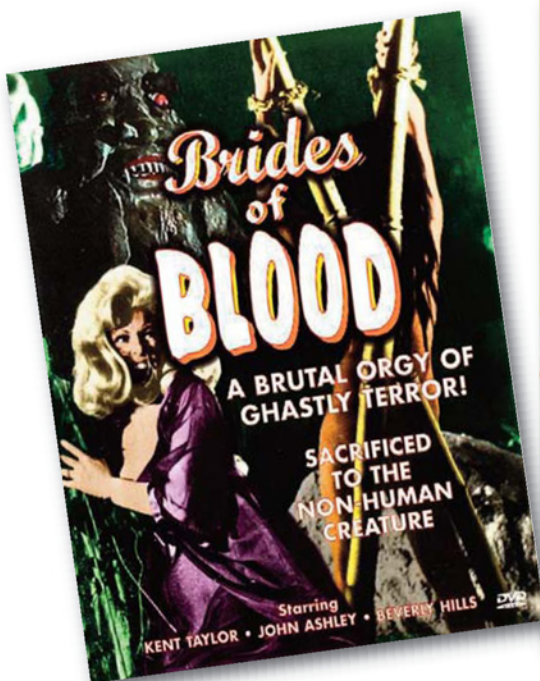
Starring Francis Lederer, Greta Thyssen, & Richard Derr, it drew little attention until it was re released in 1965 as Blood Creature. The opening credits displayed a map . On the map is a place called Isle De Sangre, aka Blood Island. In 1968 Romero and De Leon co directed Brides of Blood.

winners, nubile island girls, are tied to poles and left for the monster to satisfy his lust on. Of course there isn't a hell of a lot left when he is done. As night falls, a change comes over the island.

Trees become tentacled monsters with a taste for flesh. Butterflies become winged, fanged horrors, and somebody morphs into a horrible monster that looks like a cross between the Michelin Man, Ron Jeremy, & the Tasmanian Devil. The beast fills the night with ear splitting grunting noises as he takes his victims. Hero Jim

to stay with him. Jim declined, stating that he was there to work with the people. Beverly & Kent stayed. Beverly, by the way , is quite the unfaithful wife. She is quite enamored of Don Estaban. When her seduction attempt fails, she runs off into the jungle to pout.

At this point, Don Estaban turns into the Evil One and takes Beverly up on her offer. He tears her to pieces and the flesh eating trees get the leftovers. Kent, while searching for his wife, has a run in with Don Estaban's henchman who shows his sensitive side by lopping off Kent's head.



Starring Kent Taylor (Boston Blackie) , John Ashley (AIP's Beach Party movies) and Beverly Hills (you know her , she was in that flick about the, oh, never mind.) Kent is a scientist, John is a Peace Corps worker and Beverly has a case of the hots for any male in a 50 mile radius. As the threesome land on the beach, there is a funeral procession in progress. One of the pall bearers drops his burden and a severed arm and head fall to the sands. The Chief & his daughter, the only english speaking residents of Blood Island, inform the intruders that they have gone back to the old ways. Being that the group is here to check out the effects of radioactive fall-out on the flora & fauna of the island, they are going to get a lot more than they bargained for.

A nasty creature called "The Evil One" demands a sacrifice now and then. The locals have devised a lethal lottery. The unlucky

Farrel (Ashley) stands around until an island girl, that caught his eye, wins the lottery. Jim tries, but with no success, to rally the locals against the monster. They respond to his efforts by tying him up and throwing him in a shack.

Jim gets loose , grabs a flare gun, and goes to save his girl. The blast of light frightens off the rubbery fiend, but not before he turned one of the girls into sushi. Such are the trials & tribulations of living on an island paradise. Returning to the village, the locals are understandably upset with Jim for ruining The Evil One's night out. Jim and the girl head for the estate of Don Estaban Powers.

Let me back track here for a moment. Don Estaban is an American who lives in a walled fortress with a hulking bald body guard and a bunch of midget servants. Earlier , Don Estaban had invited the three

Jim convinces the villagers that the monster can be destroyed. The Evil One is trapped in a shack that is set on fire, ending the Evil One's reign of terror.

When this film was originally released here in '68, plastic wedding rings were handed out. The video release on Regal Video was missing the opening credits which were replaced with Bride of the Beast. The film was re released in 1979 with a totally misleading ad campaign as "Grave Desires". It was horribly cut for network TV and released as Island of Living Horror.

Returning to Blood Island a year later, the non radiated side ,free from man eating trees, and other strange shit. It's time to make an appointment with Dr. Lorca, The Mad Doctor of Blood Island. But first we must take the Oath of Green Blood.

I, a living breathing creature of the cosmic entity,

Am now ready to enter the realm of those chosen

Allowed to drink of the mystic emerald fluids herein offered

I join the order of the green blood with an open mind,

and through this liquid's powers, I am now prepared to view the unnatural green ones without fear of contamination

A tramp steamer approaches Blood Island. The passengers include Dr. Bill Foster (John Ashley) Sheila Farrow (Angelique Pettyjohn) and Carlos Lopez. Each has an agenda of sorts. Foster is there to do research, Sheila is there to find her father, and Carlos is there to persuade his mother to leave the island. Before the ship docks, a native girl taking a swim, is attacked and dismembered by a horrible monster.

The ship's captain tells Foster about a man who he rescued at sea. The guy attacked one of the crew, killing him. "I shot him a couple of times" the captain says. "He bled a lot before he jumped overboard". "The blood was green". Not a good omen for the three travelers.

After landing on the island, Sheila finds her formerly respectable father is now a

drunk who is fond of getting tanked and wandering off into the jungle. Carlos finds his mother, but she is unwilling to leave the island. Carlos's father, Don Ramon, died seven years ago. In fact , Mom has taken in a couple of boarders, Dr. Lorca and his assistant, Razak, a bald headed thug with a penchant for machetes.

Another woman is also living in the house, Marla, a hot native woman who Carlos remembers as a childhood friend. Carlos astutely puts things together and figures out that a bizarre love triangle is going on here involving his late father, Marla, Mom, and Dr. Lorca. Ok I know four sides doesn't constitute a triangle, but hell , it's the best I can do to explain all this shit so cut me some fuckin' slack ok, thanks.

Sheila decides to follow her father into the dangerous jungle. She loses him and is attacked by a slimy, green monster. One of the locals tries to save her and is laid open from crotch to throat by the razor like claws of the beast. Sheila is found and taken back to the village. Carlos, is now starting to wonder if his father, Don Ramon, is really dead. Before he can act on that thought, an injured man with a dark green hue is brought into Foster's clinic.

Foster calls in Lorca for a consultation. Lorca tells all concerned that the man is suffering from chlorophyll poisoning. He tells them not to worry , he's knows what must be done. He sends Razak back after

dark to decapitate the green guy and disembowel the man guarding him. Foster & Carlos decide to exhume the body of Don Ramon. They find a cobra and an empty coffin. Marla is extremely upset over this development.

Meanwhile back in the jungle the monster finds a couple making love and proceeds to tear them to pieces in an orgy of dismembered limbs, severed heads and scattered entrails. Marla tracks down the creature who, amazingly doesn't attack her and grovels at her feet. "I knew you weren't dead" Marla says , confirming that the creature is indeed Don Ramon. She orders Ramon to get up because "we have a lot more to do". One might wonder what sort of twisted relationship the two had before Don Ramon became what he is now.

Marla obviously has unsettled issues with Mrs Ramon & Doctor Lorca. . Marla lets Don Ramon into the house where, in a really grizzly scene, rips his unfaithful wife to shreds. Carlos inadvertently walks in on this and is knocked out by his father. Luckily Don Ramon recognizes Carlos and doesn't fillet him like he did Mom. Lorca come in after the carnage and locks Carlos in a cell. Foster and Sheila are also captured.

Lorca comes clean to his captive audience. Yes, the rampaging beast is Don Ramon. Ramon was dying from Leukemia. Lorca replaced his tainted blood with chlorophyll. This put the disease in remission for





a while until the side effects turned him into what he is now. He escaped from the demented Lorca, hiding out in the jungle. Don Ramon got into the habit of killing anyone he presumed was in the area to ferret him out.

Lorca is determined to continue his experiments and orders Razak to dispose of his guests. Marla, who's mind has snapped, sets the house on fire. Foster knocks out Razak and frees Carlos, Sheila, and some green guys. Lorca is mauled by Don Ramon. The lab blows up with Lorca, Marla, & Don Ramon trapped inside. Foster & company leave the island. As we fade to black, a green, dripping claw reaches out from under a pie of canvas, leaving it wide open for a sequel.

Mad Doctor was hacked to pieces for broadcast TV. It was retitled Tomb of the Living Dead. It fared worse on video. Regal Video's Revenge of Doctor X had the plot synopsis for Mad Doctor, but the wrong movie in the box. What ever the movie was, something about plants, it wasn't even close to Mad Doctor. Magnum Video released a version that was missing the opening credits.

The ship departs from Blood Island carrying Dr Foster and company. Foster watches the island shrink in the distance. He muses how he never got to see the island or get to know the people. "Don't worry" the ship's captain tells him. "The island will still be there when your ready

to retire." A sickening thud interrupts any further conversation as a crew member hits the deck, his skull split open by an axe swinging Don Ramon. Other crew members are brutalized by the rampaging monster until the ship catches fire and explodes. Foster is the sole survivor, but the crafty Don Ramon has also survived and is washed up on shore. As he makes his way into the jungle, the opening credits roll.

It's time for our final chapter in the Trilogy, Beast of Blood. The 'troubles' have started on Blood Island again, prompting Dr. Foster to make a return visit to sort things out. Joining him on the tramp steamer this time are Myra Russel, (Celeste Yarnell) a nosey reporter from the Honolulu Clarion, looking for some dirt. The ships Captain, played by Bev Miller, who looks like a poor man's Alan Hale. His acting talents make Conrad Brooks look like Richard Burton.

Foster's return is received by a less than enthusiastic response by the locals. It seems that the green men have returned. An island girl, Laida, informs him that she and he father were the ones that found him after the ship sank. Now her father has been taken by "The Evil One". This lady also swings one mean machete as she offs at least a dozen bad guys over the course of the film.

Foster decides to visit the abandoned Lopez mansion, former stomping grounds

of the late, demented, Dr Lorca. The place is far from empty, loaded with booby traps and a maggot infested corpse. Foster decides to go back at night with Laida as his guide. Entering the place, they finds a freshly severed head and the machete wielding Razak. Chasing the bald baddie, Foster finds a secret passageway that leads into the jungle. Going back for reinforcements, he finds that Myra has been kidnapped.

Foster and company set off in search of Myra. After a few bloody gun fights & a rather nasty impalement in a pit of spikes, Foster finds that Lorca is alive and well. He's just minus half a face, courtesy of Don Ramon from the last picture. Lorca has started up his experiments again. He has captured Don Ramon and removed his head. He keeps the head alive in a big glass jar. Lorca keeps trying to transplant new heads on to Don Ramon's body with no success. Ramon's head, however, is slowly gaining telepathic control of the body. Lorca, in some of the most hilarious dialogue ever committed to film, tries to talked to the head and is understandably perturbed at the lack of response. Leaving the lab, Lorca mutters about how the day may come when he will no longer have any use for Don Ramon. After Lorca leaves, the head makes a few snide remarks about how "That day will come sooner than you think, Lorca".

Foster allows himself to be captured, and sort of hints that he and Lorca should join forces. Lorca admits that he's completely

around the bend. "Your first impression was correct" he tells Foster, "I'm as crazy as ever". Foster's let's team up idea was a ploy. His buddies attack the camp in a Sam Peckinpah inspired shoot up with tons of bursting sqibs. Lorca orders Razak to kill Foster, but Foster blows two big holes in the bad guys's barrel chest.

Lorca, realizing his forces are losing, gathers up his records and tries to escape. Don Ramon's headless body breaks it's restraints and pummels Lorca as the head cackles insanely. "We can talk now, Lorca" it says as the body beats Lorca to a bloody pulp, then drops a piece of machinery on his head. The lab blows up as the head looks on helplessly. Myra is rescued, Laida's father is rescued, and as we leave the decimated camp, we bid Blood Island a final adieu.

Beast of Blood was the most heavily hyped of all three films. A major radio campaign relentlessly played up the head transplant angle. Folded up fake ten dollar bills were left on the streets with the Beast's face on it. Ten dollars Worth of Thrills, se Beast of Blood. I'm sure that angle pissed off the resident Winos to no end. Beast did get a video release, but I never saw it. The only reason I even know about it was that it was listed in the Video Shack Catalog. It, too was butchered for TV release as Beast of the Dead.

All three films played the Grindhouse and

Drive in circuit up until the late 70's as the Blood O Rama Shock Shows, which consisted of four films with 'blood' in the title. The "Chiller Carnival of Blood Trailer had scenes from all three films as well as Blood Demon, Blood Drinkers, Blood Creature, Theater of Blood, & Blood Fiend. "More Blood than You've Ever Seen" promised the trailer.

While the Blood Island series stopped, John Ashley knew he could make money shooting films in the Philippines. He formed a production company with Eddie Romero. He contacted Roger Corman and told him that he could film cheaply here, so Corman sent Jack Hill in to shoot a WIP film, The Big Doll House, for Corman's New World Pictures. Hill brought over Sid Haig and Sid became a mainstay for Ashley & Romero. The Big Doll House The Big Bird Cage, Black Mama, White Mama, Beyond Atlantis, Savage Sisters, and others. Sid was often teamed with Philippine actor, Vic Diaz, as either a partner or a rival crook. Diaz was know as the "Jolly, Evil, Fat Man". He was also called the Philipino Peter Lorre. Sid actually lived there for six months.

Pam Grier was another performer who built her chops in the Philippines. Sid worked with her in her first six pictures. She played the panther woman in The Twilight People, a warden in the Big Doll House, a prisoner/ revolutionary in The Big Bird Cage, and then went on to do

Coffee & Foxy Brown with Sid again as her co star.

John Ashley continued to work in the Philippines. After acting as executive producer on Apocalypse Now, Ashley left because Francis Ford Coppola basically trashed the Philippines and the country wasn't eager for a repeat performance. Ashley produced a number of TV shows including The A Team, Werewolf, Walker : Texas Ranger and others.

Where Did they go after Blood Island?

Kent Taylor did a few Independent International films like Satan's Slaves. Blood of Ghastly Horror, and others. He was also in The Crawling Hand. He died in 1987 from complications due to heart surgery.

Beverly Hills became very big and people built houses on her.

John Ashley died from a massive heart attack while filming in New York. He was 63

Angelique Pettyjohn appeared on Star Trek, She was in Fred Olen Ray's Biohazard and a couple of Porn films(as Heaven St John) to pay the bills. She died of cervical cancer in 1992

Ronald Remy played Doctor Lorca in Mad Doctor of Blood Island. He, coincidently, quit acting in 1969. He was executive pro-





ducer on Ross Hagen's Wonder Women in '73

Eddie Garcia took over the role of Lorca in *Beast of Blood*. He continued to work with Ashley and Romero, usually playing a cop or warden. He won 25 awards including best actor, best supporting actor & best director. At age 87, he is still working today

Dr Lorca is working for a large HMO and is my primary care physician

Vic Diaz retired from film due to age and bad health. In an interview in *Shock Cinema*, he had fond recollections of Pam Grier and hanging out with Sid Haig.

Celeste Yarnell, who I had the privilege of interviewing a couple of years ago, is in the homeopathic pet care business. She had great memories of working on *Beast of Blood*.

Eddie Romero is 74 and has garnered many awards for screenplays. As far as I know he is still active

Sid Haig appeared in a ton of films and had a career resurgence when he appeared in Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses* as Capt Spaulding. Sid is one of the coolest guys on the planet and appears at every Monster Mania Con in New Jersey. He has a whole new generation of fans who have rediscovered his early films.

Random thoughts: *Brides of Blood* was probably a one shot deal to cash in on the Drive In patron's insatiable appetite for blood, nudity & gore. *Mad Doctor* seems to be sort of a homage to the H.G. Lewis films with all of the viscera strewn about. *Beast of Blood*, however, seemed to have been influenced by Sam Peckinpah's *Wild Bunch*. It substituted exploding blood sqibs instead of ripped up bodies. All three

films are guilty pleasures and thanks to Sam Sherman, we finally got them uncut on DVD. Ashley and others just churned out horror and exploitation fare from the Philippines for years. People like Sid Haig, Pam Grier, Margret Markov, Vic Diaz, Joy Bang, Cheri Caffaro, Gloria Hendry, and other became fixtures on the drive in and grindhouse screens.

Now DVDs are the new Drive Ins and Grindhouses. Call me old fashioned, but I miss freezing my ass off in the dead of winter to watch *Beast of Blood* at the Morris Plains Drive in. I miss sitting through *The Blood O Rama Shock Show* in The Embassy for 8 hours straight. I miss the winos, the white outs, the cat calls, the dangerous rest rooms. Why, because as fucked up as this may sound, it was almost a living, breathing entity. It was life, it was fun, it was a roller coaster ride. And now it's over. And that is a friggin' shame.





BITCH SLAP



Photo by Nadia Pandolfo

**BITCH
SLAP**







**BITCH
SLAP**



SCARS

If you thought Tarantino's **Death Proof** did exploitation justice, director Rick Jacobson's **Bitch Slap** will spiral you straight back to the 70's. More accurately the 60's, since his hot trio of leading ladies are some of the baddest bitches since **Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!** Anyone who's seen a trailer or a poster has already fallen head over heels for Erin Cummings, Julia Voth and America Olivo, three women who've come together to find \$200 million worth of diamonds in the desert. Learn now about the actors who made these characters so empowered.

SCARS: We stumbled upon **Bitch Slap** surfing the web. Tell us how you each got involved with what looks like the Grindhouse-style film of the century?

ERIN CUMMINGS: To be completely boring, I came to **Bitch Slap** by way of the casting system actually working. No nepotism! My agent submitted my headshot, I was called in for the audition, then I threatened their lives if they didn't cast me. Seriously.

When I first heard the title of the film, I told my agent that he could go fuck himself and that he shouldn't be submitting me for low-rent, low-grade crap films that had terrible dialogue, the women were completely objectified and relied on toilet humor and gratuitous nudity to lure viewers. Then I read the script and completely ate shit when I realized it was bordering on brilliance and none of the things that I assumed it would be when I saw the title. When I was called in to meet with the producers, I found out that Zoe Bell was going to do the stunts. I think I may have peed a little because I had seen her work in **Grindhouse** and knew her from the **Kill Bill** films and was jonesing to work with her. I then found out that William Gregory Lee had been cast. I worked with him in Hawaii on another project a few years ago





and just adore him. That was the moment that I informed the producers that, if they didn't cast me, I would hunt them down and kill them. Considering my character, and who the audience ultimately finds out she is, that was probably the line that got me hired. I wouldn't, however, recommend it to other actors...

JULIA VOTH: When I auditioned, I was pretty new to the game, actually it was only my fifth theatrical audition. But I guess they saw something in me and asked me to come back and read again. Two days later they offered me the role of Trixie That was one of the best phone calls of my life!

AMERICA OLIVO: I had just finished filming a thriller feature called *Circle*, and was fresh off of *General Hospital*, when I received a phone call from Luke Daniels, producer of *Circle*, who asked if it would be okay to pass along my number to his friend who recently saw a screening of the movie. I didn't realize it was legendary Rick Jacobson who had directed my brother-in-law, Jason Brooks, in many episodes of *Baywatch Hawaii* and didn't put much thought into the call.

When Rick got me on the phone, he expressed how much he enjoyed *Circle* and my performance in it and had a last minute replacement to fill for his new film. He

said he thought I'd be perfect for the role. I naturally assumed I would be playing a similar role as I did in *Circle*, Britt, a wealthy south beach Miami Cuban party girl with a thick Cuban accent. Since I usually get cast in roles that have accents or are ethnic, I naturally assumed it was similar. Rick said he wouldn't be able to describe the script, other than he was a huge fan of Russ Meyer films and was excited that *Grindhouse* came out, but wanted to do a film that went even farther than *Grindhouse* in honoring the exploitation films of the 60's and 70's. He said he'd send me a script, that I was to read 20 pages and call him back to say whether I "got it" or not. If I "got it" and was interested in doing it, he said I was to meet him IMMEDIATELY, in Chatsworth at the Associate Producer, Brian Peck's, house for an audition.

Well, if you know anything about Chatsworth, you'd know what came across my mind when I saw the script come in my email inbox titled, *Bitch Slap*, I called my agent, Brandy Gold at Talentworks, to verify the legitimacy of the situation and luckily she'd already read the script and was a huge fan of the project. I read to about page 4 and loved it myself and had my boyfriend, at the time, drive me over to Chatsworth while I studied the material, to show them how I would portray Camero. Funny thing was, this role was

SOOOO far from Britt in *Circle*, I have NO idea how Rick saw Camero in my interpretation of Britt, but he saw something I didn't know was in me. Rick had promised I'd be able to do things in this film that only male action stars usually get to do and that I'd be hard pressed to find another role like this one. He was absolutely right!

SCARS: What was shooting like? How intense did it get?

EC: Shooting was great. We started on a green screen set, which eased everyone into the process without the distractions of weather and location - that came later. It was an ideal makeup for creating a familial type bond that ended up really helping the cast and crew when things got rough in the desert. After two weeks in the comfort of a soundstage, we moved to Hell. Or, as the locals like to call it - Lancaster, CA. If it wasn't so biting cold that we had to bundle up like Inuit, it was so blistering hot that people went a little nutty from heat stroke. Then there was the wind. So thick with sand that you sometimes couldn't keep your eyes open - and forget about trying to look sexy or keep hair out of your face. The makeup department was in a constant state of, "Fuck it." Poor Rick Jacobson... we were using his '53 Thunderbird, which is my character's car and every time we opened the car door, a



beachful of sand would blow into the car, just destroying the interior. I saw his baby get beaten with every take.

Probably the worst that it got was the last two weeks, when we were shooting the epic fight scene. On top of the cold, the heat, the wind and the sand was the insane amount of blood, dirt, and sweat that was liberally applied to me, America, Zoe Bell and my stunt double, Sabine Varnes. All day long, just hanging around in the heat and sandy wind, covered in syrup. At the end of the day, we would head to the makeup trailer, strip down to nothing and smear ourselves with shaving cream. (It's a Hollywood trick to get the blood stain off skin.) Now, saying ALL of this, I do have to admit that the shoot was incredible. We could always count on wrapping the day at 7PM, a delicious lunch (although it was sometimes covered in sand), dinners at restaurants every night, one of the coolest crews I've ever worked with and a team of producers who treated the three of us as daughters, sisters, partners and friends. It was intense, but I've never worked on a project where I've been made to feel more valuable and appreciated and that, in turn, has made me a fan for life of the people involved in this film. I would do it all again, blood and sand.

JV: Filming was amazing and it pushed me to places I never thought I could go, mentally and physically. It got pretty intense between the fight scenes, sand storms, freezing cold in the morning to extreme heat in the afternoon, love scenes, and my dance scenes. We were in the Mojave Desert for four weeks after that initial, two week green screen. It was in your face all the time, but so much fun... I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

AO: Literally, the most intense shooting experience I've had to date and I thought I'd been through it all with *The Last Resort*. Holy cow. The conditions out in that desert were the most intense conditions any of the very seasoned cast and crew had EVER been up against. There was real sweat, fake sweat, real dirt, fake dirt, real blood, fake blood, real scars, fake scars, and we were sun baked and EXHAUSTED! It was thrilling and grueling, all at the same time. Lying in sand for hours with scorpions scattering about... So crazy.

SCARS: What were the best and worst experiences each of you had? All weather aside.

EC: Best - the producers. They're like my family now. Worst - you can guess, the weather. Mother Nature can suck it. You'd think she'd be on the side of a film about female empowerment. I guess she missed the metaphor.

JV: For me the best part of making Bitch Slap was just making it, all of it. Every day was something new, and every day I checked something off my list... Can you run in the desert with four inch stilettos heels? Check. Can you wield a sword and make it look good? Check. Can you work on green screen? Check. Can you survive through sand storms and 40mph wind-storms? Check. Can you dance in a dominatrix outfit? Check! And not to mention all the cool things I got to do, we had the most amazing cast and crew I could have asked for. Rick Jacobson and Eric Gruendemann (executive producer) really believed in me and gave me the freedom to bring this amazing character they wrote to life. They trusted all of us with the responsibility of carrying their movie; this is their baby, so it was a great honor.

AO: Best experience is watching it now, with or without an audience. It is such a fun ride and all the hard work really paid off. Also, getting to represent Bitch Slap on the cover of the June 2009 Playboy! What an honor! Worst part, laser treatment bills from trying to get rid of the scars and wounds I acquired during the shoot.

SCARS: Without spoiling anything, if a sequel arises from the aftermath of Bitch Slap, can we expect to see you all working together again?

EC: There's no telling. Not everyone lives to see the end of Bitch Slap! Then again, that doesn't mean that some characters couldn't come back anyway (for reasons I can't go into). And some people who live may not be relevant to whatever story is told in the second installment. I like to think that we'd all be together again in some form or another, but I also know that, at the end of the day, the writers (Rick Jacobson and Eric Gruendemann) have created a franchise worth investing in and, if I were not in the future films, I will always be honored to have played a major



role in the first one.

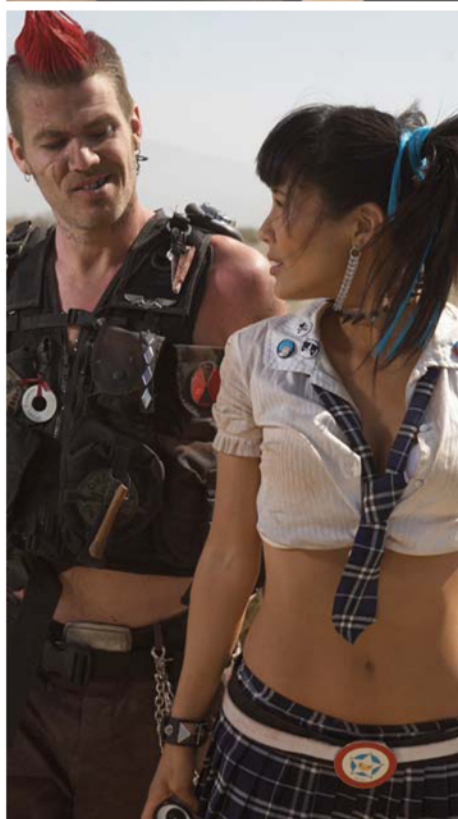
JV: All I know is this has always been intended to be a trilogy. But we don't know any details yet. I consider America and Erin very good friends of mine, and I'd love to work with them again. They are both incredibly talented women and I learned so much from them on set. Actually, I already worked with Erin in a movie called *The Anniversary*, it's a romantic comedy by John Campea.

AO: Anything can happen in *Bitch Slap* world, so... you may or may not see us in the sequel. Even we don't know. We're told to standby for further notice.

SCARS: What can we expect from each of you in the future? Anything as intense?

EC: I'm actually working on something pretty intense right now! As I type this, I'm sitting in my trailer in New Zealand, on the set of the new Starz flagship series, *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, in which I play Sura, *Spartacus*' wife. Yes, that's MORE blood and sand. The show will begin airing in January 2010 and is being shot completely on green screen, so it has a very 300 feel to it, from a visual standpoint. It's based in 73 BC in Ancient Rome and tells the story of the Roman slave who became a gladiator and started a slave revolution against the Roman army. I've been incredibly fortunate in that three of the episodes that I've done so far have been directed by *Bitch Slap* director, Rick Jacobson. Having worked so closely with Rick on *Bitch Slap* really made coming to New Zealand and working on such an emotionally demanding project a dream for me.

On the first day, I had a very difficult scene with Andy Whitfield, who plays *Spartacus*. Rick immediately knew where I was going to go emotionally and what my process for getting there would be, based on our work together on *Bitch Slap*. This knowledge and short-hand communication between us made things flow so beautifully and effortlessly in many of our scenes together. Andy said to me, after completing our second episode with Rick, "I can really appreciate what your experience on *Bitch Slap* must have been like, working with Rick. He's amazing." My experience of working with him again on this project has allowed me to see why



certain directors and actors continue to work together. There's just an ease, a comfort and an appreciation for one another's professionalism and method of working that just makes you excited to continue collaborating. Funnily enough, there is a whole web of people I've worked with prior to this project. Steven S. DeKnight, the Showrunner, directed an episode of *Dollhouse* that I did last year, which is how I first heard about this project. Michael Hurst, who starred with the girls and I in *Bitch Slap*, is directing several episodes of *Spartacus*. Sadly, I'm not working those episodes. The actors all adore him and it kills me to not have the experience of being directed by him in at least one episode. Also, Lucy Lawless, who has a great cameo in *Bitch Slap* is one of the stars of *Spartacus*, playing Lucretia, the wife of the Ludus owner. You would think that having so many connections to the show would have made getting this role a snap. However, like all things that are worth it, it was a fight. Months and months of auditions and fighting for the role, even Rick going to bat for me on many occasions. I got the *Spartacus* job and thought, "Man, I'm glad I didn't suck in *Bitch Slap*!"

JV: *Bitch Slap* takes it to a whole other level of intensity. And I think as an actress you need you stretch and work your craft to explore other types of genres. After *Bitch Slap*, I did *Love Hurts*, starring Jenna Elfman, and Carrie Ann Moss as Amanda. I play Young Amanda 20 years ago. Then, *The Anniversary*, which I was telling you about. It's a romantic comedy about love and loss. I am the main character's love interest. It really is a fall-off-your-seat-laugh-out-loud kind of movie. And I just finished a show for MTV called *The Phone*; Justin Timberlake produced it. *The Phone* mixed the worlds of reality and scripted television, and puts them head to head in an intense race against time. I played a scripted secret agent, which was a lot of fun.

AO: I just finished a film called *Neighbor*, which was THE MOST GORY THING YOU WILL EVER SEE ON SCREEN! It's doing the horror festival circuit now. That's where I met my husband, (engaged after two weeks on set, while I was torturing him Kathy Bates/James Caan style) and we owe a lot to that film and its director, Robert Masciantonio, for bringing us

together. I am assuming the movie will be banned in most countries due to its graphic nature, so I'm not sure if you'll see it, but that's the most intense thing I've ever done to date. It's so gory... it'll make you vomit or laugh. So, it'll be interesting to see what theatre will pick that one up! One with good mops. Egads!

Also, I've got a dance music single out distributed by Dauman Music and Universal that I'm having a blast promoting. It's called "Déjà vu" and you can check out the recent mixes on my site www.americaolivo.com.

SCARS: So, finally, if one of our readers was feeling especially bold and wanted to try to hook up with one of your characters, how should they act and what might happen?

JV: That's a great question. If a SCARS reader wanted to hook up with Trixie? They should sweep her off her feet and give her the white picket fence dream. Underneath her rock hard body / stripper exterior, there is someone who just wants and needs to be loved. But cross her or do wrong to her, and she will make you wish you never had.

AO: If a SCARS reader hooked up with Camero, they should expect a lot of bruising.



TRAVIS NEAL

THE NEW VOICE OF DIVINE HERESY

BY MATT MOLLOY

Two years ago, Divine Heresy's debut album *Bleed The Fifth* made heads turn and bang. A band that had been rumbled about for years, since guitarist Dino Cazares' departure from Fear Factory, was now a reality. This summer, Divine Heresy released their sophomore album *Bringer of Plagues*, determined to get everyone to still rock the fuck out – but now under the metal guidance of a new vocalist. Meet Travis Neal.

SCARS: Tell us the story of how you became the new singer of Divine Heresy.

TN: Well, I was at home online and saw a bulletin posted by the band that they were looking for a new vocalist. I said to myself, I gotta do this. I didn't think I would get the gig considering that the band probably had thousands of submissions, but I was going to give it my all! I was surprised when I got the call by Dino to come audition, and to get a phone call from Dino at all. I drove two hours away to their rehearsal space in Los Angeles.

I came in ready to only do the two songs that I was to audition with, but then threw down five more of the songs from "*Bleed the Fifth*." The band was very happy with my audition and asked me to fill in for the upcoming Mexico/Brazil shows at that time. They said if all worked out on the road, and we all meshed, that I would have a permanent position in the band. With three weeks of rehearsals and hanging out, I was offered the position and now the rest is history!

SCARS: How has this experience been for you so far?

TN: The experience has been simply amazing. To work a group of musicians that have the backgrounds that these guys do is awesome! The shows have been amazing and the fans are to die for. We have only played a good handful of shows so far, no major tours. But it has been a real great experience so far.

SCARS: Divine Heresy is one of many musical projects that you're currently involved with. Have you approached this one any differently than your others?

TN: Well, Divine Heresy is a very in your face band, unlike my other bands. I knew I needed to write something very brutal, but very much my own style. I needed the heavy stuff to be brutal, the melodic stuff to be amazing, and everything in between to be boundless! I feel that's what I've done on "*Bringer of Plagues*."

SCARS: Divine Heresy is one of a few bands for you. Tell us about your other projects.

TN: All of my other projects are a bit different. Kind of like different levels of music. For instance, Kemikal Burn is a studio project that I have with my production company partner, Jonathan Merkel. The project is more of a rock vibe, kind of like 30 Seconds to Mars or A Perfect Circle. The next step up would be Hatetimes-nine. The band is more of a progressive metal sound with odd time signatures, and my vocal style is about 70% clean vocals and 30% heavy vocals. The next step from that would be The Bereaved. Located in Sweden, we are pure Swedish melodic metal, reminiscent of Soilwork, In



Flames, and At The Gates. The band is a good mixture of clean vocals as well as heavy vocals. Then finally you have Divine Heresy. Very brutal and extreme, with driving rhythms and epic choruses! More of a heavy version of what I do... but very nicely done!

SCARS: Is balancing time between all of them difficult?

TN: No, pretty much only two are going on at once. I'm currently playing shows with my band Hatetimesnine all over Southern California, Arizona, and Nevada. When DH starts to tour, I'll be only working on that. It will be my main priority.

As for The Bereaved, we're locked into a deal where our hands are kind of tied and it is very hard for us to tour. Otherwise I would be working on touring with them, but for now people can just hear us on CD. For the next record we're planning a full onslaught for the planet earth! So when DH has time off after our tour cycle, I will be working with The Bereaved for sure!

SCARS: Of course, I have to ask if you're a fan of any horror movies...

TN: Ohh yes, for sure! As for movies, mmm, "Frankenstein" is my ultimate favorite. But there's also "Creature from the Black Lagoon," "Friday the 13th," "Nightmare on Elm Street," "Hellraiser" for sure. And "Silent Hill" is my absolute favorite video game. Anything to do with that story always sparks my interest always.

SCARS: Has horror had any part in your song writing at all?

TN: Yes, I've written a whole concept album for my other band Hatetimesnine about the "Silent Hill" story-line. I also wrote the lyrics for the track "Darkness Embedded" on the new Divine Heresy record "Bringer of Plagues" about a certain part of the game "Silent Hill: Homecoming."



I've written about other things as well, that have to do with real life horror. The song "Letter to Mother" on "Bringer of Plagues" was inspired by the early 1900's serial killer Albert Fish. The phrase "Letter to Mother" is referring to the confession letter sent to the mother of Grace Budd, the little girl he kidnapped and cannibalized on. To this day it's still held as one of the most chilling and shocking confessions in the history of the US.

SCARS: What, or who, are some of your other influences?

TN: I have a lot of influences. To name a few, Dan Swano, Burton C Bell, Anders Friden, "Mangan" Klavborn, Kristoffer Rygg, Sting, Brett Smith, Aaron Lewis, Rob Flynn, Jimmie Strimell, Justin Timberlake...

SCARS: Thank you for taking time out to speak with us and good luck with all of your musical endeavors!

TN: And thank you for the interview and turning me on to your killer magazine!! Much love and respect!

Check out Travis Neal's bands online at:

Travis's music page -
www.myspace.com/eighttenmusic

Divine Heresy -
www.myspace.com/divineheresyband

The Bereaved -
www.myspace.com/thebereavedswe

Hatetimesnine -
www.myspace.com/hatetimesnine

Kemikal Burn -

www.myspace.com/kemikalburn





MICHAEL FELSHER OF RED SHIRT PICTURES

GIVES US A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT HOW IT IS DONE

INTERVIEW BY MATT MOLLOY

Have you ever wondered just who gets the awesome job of making those documentaries, audio commentaries, and interview featurettes... making it completely irresistible to buy (yet again) a re-released horror classic? You can blame your duplicate DVD purchases on Michael Felsher and Red Shirt Pictures.

They've worked on the likes of "Hellraiser: 10th Anniversary Edition," "The Monster Squad," "Night of the Living Dead," "Pumpkinhead," "Texas Chainsaw Massacre," and countless other drool-worthy projects. Here's your chance to learn more about the man and company who provide us horror nerds with so much trivia.

SCARS: Tell us a little about yourself and Red Shirt Pictures.

MF: I got my start by working at Anchor Bay Entertainment in July of 2000. I was sort of a utility infielder there. I helped in acquisitions, marketing, research, convention representation, web site management. You name it, I did it. It was an amazing time there, and I got to work on some of the greatest horror DVDs of all time. I wrote liner notes for over 40 releases and towards the end of my five years there, I did my first video featurette for their release of "Night of the Demons" featuring Linnea Quigley. It gave me the bug to do that full-time, and I left in April 2005 and devoted my time to Red Shirt Pictures full-time.

SCARS: How involved is the process of tracking down materials for DVD extras?

MF: It depends on the movie. Sometimes everyone you contact has loads of materials for you to use on the DVD, and sometimes you have to turn over every rock to find even a few photographs. And sometimes that applies to

people as well! Currently, I'm working on a project where two of the three lead actors have seemingly dropped off the face of the Earth. I've had projects take months before everything comes together, but by and large I have been very lucky in the materials that I have been able to get access to for the projects I've worked on.

SCARS: The majority of your projects are in the horror category. Did it just work out that way or is it your intention to focus on this creepy genre?

MF: It has been by design to a large extent. The genre is my first love and always has been, so I am always committed to working on genre product. Plus once you've had success in a certain area, you tend to be able to find work in that arena more easily. Which is fine by me. I have done a couple of non-horror items, and I always want to branch out and try new things, but hey, I'm not complaining!

SCARS: You've done work for everything from the

"Texas Chainsaw Massacre" and "Hellraiser" to "Creepshow" and "Monster Squad." What is it like having the opportunity to enhance such legendary film?

MF: I don't know how it has happened that I have literally been able to work on films that influenced my life in so many ways. I mean those titles you mentioned are "dream projects" for any DVD producer and the privilege of being able to contribute to those films' DVD releases has been an honor. Plus getting to meet and work with so many talented and influential people, such as George Romero and Fred Dekker, has been a joy and the real reward from what I do. I have been lucky as hell in so many ways, and yet I have aggressively pursued most of the projects I've worked on. The phone rarely rings with an out-of-the-blue offer. You have to create your own opportunities, and so logically those films and so many others are the ones I've gone after to be a part of.



Continued on page 34

SCARS: On top of your work with re-releases, you've also been involved with Romero's "Diary Of The Dead" and the upcoming untitled ...Of The Dead from the beginning. What's the experience been like?

MF: Well that's another one to file under dream projects. I supervised the shooting of all the behind-the-scenes footage and interviews for both of those films, and there is no greater honor than being on the set of a George Romero movie. I was so fortunate to meet a cameraman named Graeme Potts on "Diary" - that began a long collaboration on numerous projects and it has been a great experience spending weeks on the sets of those movies documenting the filmmaking process. Both films were very independent, and very intense shoots, but were terrific experiences, and I hope to continue that on the next film from George... whatever and whenever it is.

SCARS: What's been your favorite project so far?

MF: Oh that's an impossible question to answer. I'll always have a soft-spot for "Effects" from Synapse Films, as it was my first major documentary project and it was a wonderful opportunity to shed light on a film that had been literally lost for 25 years. Then "Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2" was a landmark, as it was my first project for a major studio and it was a film that I loved since I was a kid. The joy is being able to celebrate films that have never found their audience or have gradually

found a re-appraisal over the years. Films like "Monster Squad," "TCM 2," "Sundown," and now of course "Night of the Creeps." These films deserved so much better than what they got when they were released, and it's such a joy to see them find their rightful place in the genre after so many years. "Night of the Creeps" has been a long hard fight to get out there, and it might be some of my best work to date. It's one of my all time favorite movies!

SCARS: Are there any films that you haven't yet worked on that you would love to do?

MF: Oh there's plenty, but I have to admit now that "Night of the Creeps" is behind me, I feel like retiring almost! There's tons of great films though that I would love to see out there and be a part of... but I shall refrain from speaking their names aloud so as not to jinx myself.

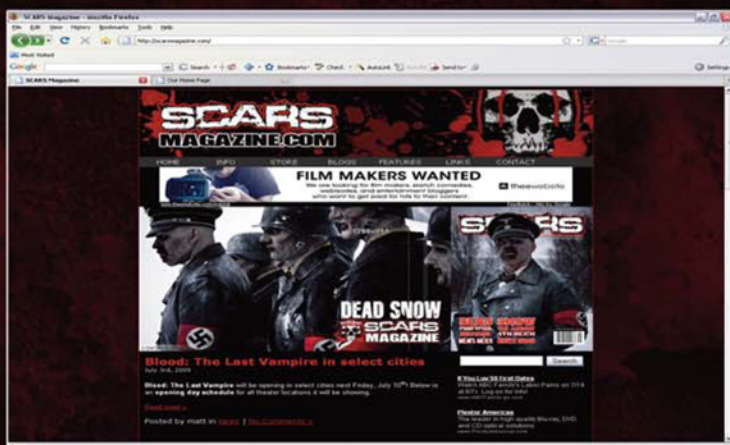
SCARS: What are your upcoming releases and works-in-progress?

MF: Well this September and October see the release of "Night of the Creeps," "The Stepfather," "Stepfather 2," and "The Gate." There's also a special edition of "The Wraith" in the works, but no date on that one yet. I'll be devoting a lot of the fall and winter to working on "Survival of the Dead" stuff for the eventual DVD release, which I would imagine to be sometime in 2010.

Thank you Michael! Learn more at www.redshirtpictures.com.



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STAYING COMPOSED WITH TYLER BATES

Interview By Matt Molloy

A typical day for composer Tyler Bates could involve a few different things. Maybe he's composing music for a hit video game, or maybe he's taking a phone call from one of his friends – oh, only Rob Zombie, James Gunn, or Zack Snyder - about scoring a new film. With a roster like that, chances are some of your favorite movies have one name in common in their crew: Tyler Bates.



SCARS: How did you first get your start composing music for film?

TB: My brother was line-producing a low-budget slasher and they needed a few cues, but had little money. The executive producer liked the music and asked me to score his next low-budget film.

SCARS: Is writing for film much different than writing stand-alone music?

TB: Of course it is. Film music is predicated on the story/genre, the cinematic style, the actors, the overall production quality, as well as the director's point of view. It is certainly nice to be hired to "do what you do," but the context is much different than having a blank canvas with only the pressure imposed upon one's self to produce music worthy of listening to. Whatever that may be. Lol.

SCARS: I think it's safe to say you've made a good impression on many of the directors you've worked with since you're often brought back for multiple projects. At the top of this list is Rob Zombie. From "The Devil's Rejects," "Werewolf Women of the S.S.," "Halloween," "H2" and the animated "The Haunted World of El Superbeasto," you seem to be Rob's go-to guy for all of his film projects. Tell us how this working relationship began and what it's like now.

TB: Rob and I have a mutual colleague and friend that told me how much he liked the score for "Dawn of the Dead," just as Rob was finishing up production on "Rejects." I offered to help Rob with the score, thinking that he would want to handle that detail. He called me and asked me to watch and discuss the film with him. He

stressed that no "temp" music felt close to what he felt the film needed (as he was unsure himself), and then asked if I was up to figuring it out.

My goal was not only to create a score for his film, but also to create a distinct "sound" for his movies, much like Rob's solo music has a distinct and instantly recognizable quality. I tend to work best with directors who have a unique voice as filmmakers. I always try to create music that is a true extension of who they are as artists.

SCARS: Rob made it clear that "H2" has a totally different feel than how he wrote his version of "Halloween." Was your approach in scoring this sequel different as well?

TB: The entire process was much different than the other films we have done together. The schedule was extremely short, which compounded the usual pressure we face in making movies. Rob truly made this film his own, but with the departure from the conventions of Michael Myers came a greater challenge to support the sensibility of that character and image within a Rob Zombie film. This is a completely new look at "Halloween," except for the knife!

SCARS: Being a musician himself, does Rob have any part in creating the score or does he leave that completely up to you?

TB: Rob doesn't make specific suggestions as to what I should write, however he does like to experiment with my music in the editing room. I typically begin writing as he's filming, so that there's a fair amount of our own music to work with as they begin editing. Once Rob begins

working with his editor, Glenn Garland, music tends to fly around the film a bit. This is somewhat motivated by the fact that I have not written the complete score by this point, so the limited music I supplied to them became the temp score, which was updated as I wrote. This is not typical of my process on most films, but the truncated post schedule on this one in particular broke the conventions of what I consider to be a typical process to writing and producing a score.

SCARS: You have also been attached to the now postponed "Tyrannosaurus Rex." Is there anything you can tell us about this film?

TB: I read the "T-Rex" script, and I think that it will be a great movie. I am not at liberty to discuss specific details about it, but I imagine that Rob will make this film after he tours in support of his new album.

SCARS: Have you been involved with any of Rob's music projects?

TB: I did a string arrangement for a song titled "The Man Who Laughs," from his forthcoming album.

SCARS: James Gunn is another director you have a history with. You were both involved with the 2004 version of "Dawn of the Dead," with James being the writer of the screenplay. Did this play a part in you composing his film "Slither"?

TB: James liked the score for "Dawn," and he was also working on "Slither" with producers who were involved with "Dawn" as well. I am guessing the producers suggested that we would work well together, which fortunately is the case. I



think James is enormously talented. I am looking forward to our next project together.

SCARS: Can you give us a sneak peek of what to expect in his latest project that you will be part of, "The Belcoo Experiment"?

TB: This movie is not officially in motion just yet. James Gunn has decided to make another film instead, which I am not able to discuss at this time. It does go into production near the end of November. I can say that I have not read or seen a film quite like it.

SCARS: What was it like working on James' hilarious "PG Porn" project?

TB: James is a good friend of mine, so the camaraderie is great! The film music business is rather stressful, so any opportunity to just have fun is healthy. This notion can be lost in the stress of some projects.

SCARS: On top of doing the score for Zack Snyder's "The Watchmen" and "300," your work can also be heard on the video games for both movies ("The Watchmen: The End Is Nigh" and "300: March to Glory") as well as the game "The Rise of the Argonauts." How do you go about composing for games?

TB: Video games are a distinct challenge unto themselves. The technology employed by each game developer varies, and with each game the available technology allows for new possibilities, which requires that you become very familiar with the process of each developer you work with. It's paramount that the composer understands how they plan to format the music for a given game, and that you write, record, and deliver music that will

serve this aspect of the game as well as the actual game play in effort to achieve the best end result.

Movies are always a tremendous challenge, but the format is linear as opposed to modular. Film requires the composer to continue to develop the score as the picture evolves. A film score is an extension of the director's vision specifically, whereas a game score is a bit more general in its purpose, while taking into account the possibilities within the scope of game play.

SCARS: Do you have any plans, or time for that matter, to do any solo music work?

TB: I am currently collaborating with friends that I have worked with over the years. We plan on making a record and performing live. I would also like to do a solo record at some point. After working exclusively on commissioned works for the past several years, I have stockpiled a number of ideas that I would like to record. I would also like to show the people who care about my work another side of what I am about.

SCARS: Any other future projects you can tell us about?

TB: I am in the latent stages of scoring the new "Army of Two" video game, and also the latest season of "Californication." I have a few projects either in production, or coming up in the beginning of the year that I cannot discuss as yet.

SCARS: Do you have any advice for aspiring musicians considering your line of work?

TB: This is a long-term deal, so preparation for success (which can take a long time) is mandatory. It's important to learn as much about filmmaking as possible. A composer needs to understand the semantics of production in order to engage in a process that is best for the director and the film. An effective film score is obviously very important to a film's artistic success, but it is necessary to understand that it works in concert with sound design, and most importantly, it needs to acutely embody the director's personal artistic sensibilities.

I recommend traveling and garnering life experience. It is tempting to lock yourself into a studio for your entire twenties while you're trying to catch a break, but if you can't communicate with directors and producers as a person of culture and experience you will have a difficult time forming and sustaining relationships with substantive people. I think that it is very important to consider the quality of human beings one invests themselves in, in life in general. This will have a long-term affect on your body of work as well as your attitude towards creating music. Also, remember that problems occur from time to time, so being solution-oriented will keep your head cool (and those around you) when a situation becomes stressful. Don't forget to enjoy your work!

Editor's Note: At the time of interview, Tyler was not at liberty to discuss his next project with James Gunn. We can tell you now, it's named "Super" and stars Rainn Wilson, Liv Tyler, and Ellen Paige. Rainn stars as a superhero who "has no super-powers other than a wrench pipe." Gunn calls the script a favorite of his, and we can't wait to see what he and Tyler bring.

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